



Welcome to the first Vision Support news sheet of 2021.

Everyone at Vision Support has been shocked by the sad news of the death, from COVID-19, of Alan Webb of Chester Lions. Pictured below. Alan has been a friend and a supporter of Vision Support for many years, raising the money for

projects such as the setting up of the drop-in centre at The Bluecoat in Chester. He also worked and lobbied tirelessly for services for people with sight loss in Chester. We would like to send our condolences to his family and friends on their loss. Alan made a big difference to the lives of people with sight loss in Chester, he will be very much missed by all of us.



Unfortunately we had more sad news which reached us rather belatedly. It was only at the end of January that we heard about the death in October last year of Kenneth Richardson.

Ken was 99 years old and was a Trustee when we were still called The Chester and North East Wales Society for the Blind.

Ken was responsible for writing a new constitution and overseeing the restructure of the charity as it became Vision Support, a modern, forward-looking service delivery organisation that we remain to this day. This really was, excuse the pun, visionary at the time, we owe thanks to Ken.

Our condolences go to his daughter Nancy and the family.

Vision Support Home Visiting Service



As a Home Visitor for Vision Support it is my role to try to overcome the barriers and problems faced by people with sight loss.

I provide regular contact with our service users, especially in these difficult times when people are struggling with isolation and possible loneliness. Normally I would visit service users in their homes every few weeks to discuss their current concerns and have a general chat over a cup of tea.

People can raise a variety of issues connected to their sight loss. I am able to refer to or signpost people on to other organisations, who can support with things such as safety in the home. Some people may request adaptations in the home and/or care packages which can be put in place. I can also offer advice regarding independent living aids such as liquid level indicators, one cup kettles, adequate lighting and intercom systems.

If someone is interested in reading there are a few different ways to access books or newspapers. Signing up to talking newspapers can be a good way of keeping in touch with local news and listening to audiobooks can provide entertainment when you don't feel like catching up with your favourite T.V program!

Previously, I was able to accompany service users for a walk or go out for a coffee with them. At present this is not possible, but I have been shopping and collecting medication for service users who have either been isolating or shielding and do not have anyone to run their essential errands for them.

Now more than ever, it is important that service users have someone they feel they can talk to about how they are coping. Having a friendly voice on the other end of a phone is sometimes all a person wants to feel they are still connected to the outside world. Maybe it's just to have a laugh or a moan about day to day life or to have someone to talk to about how frustrating life can be at the present time.

If you would be interested in the Home Visitor service please give us a call on **01244 381515** or email **information@visionsupport.org.uk**

Associated Optical

I would like to take this moment to introduce myself, I'm Richard Bowring and I work for Associated Optical as an Area Manager.

I think we would all agree, the past year has been challenging for us all. Through these unprecedented times, Associated Optical have been able to support people living with sight loss by providing a wide variety of low-vision aids.

For example, we stock items from Eschenbach, a company who are now offering various forms of DIGITAL magnification. All of their products have their own unique features. From small digital magnifiers, ideal for travel, to larger displays including features such as scrolling text and TV connectivity, to an impressive 12" digital magnifier with touchscreen display, Eschenbach have something for everyone. Also available is a larger DIGITAL magnifier with a 16" desktop screen. It offers 1.3x-45x magnification, speech output and a tilting camera perfect for crafts, to name just a few of its fantastic features!

Associated Optical are very proud to be Live Eyewear's UK partner for Cocoons® Polaré and Low Vision FitOver Sunglasses; in my opinion, the best tinted overlays on the market. Details can be found at www.cocoons.uk

*product details can be found www.associatedoptical.com

If you would like more information, please do get in touch at info@associatedoptical.com, or call us on 01628 600 410

There are a lot of companies that specialise in low vision aids such as Cobolt Systems Ltd and Synapptic, to name a few.

From specialised kit and tech software right down to basics for the kitchen, there's a lot out there to discover! If you know what you are after but aren't sure where to start, or if you'd just like to know a bit more about what assistive equipment is available call us at Vision Support on 01244 381515 or email information@visionsupport.org.uk

Further Services

We've been available over the phones all throughout the pandemic and the various lockdowns, but we wanted to update you a little more on how our services are currently running now we are into 2021.

The Openline service has been able to offer its usual help and advice remotely to the local community, thanks to funding from Chester Lions. Jo Jardine, Service Coordinator, explains: "Our volunteers and staff have made regular phone calls to our most vulnerable clients. We check on their wellbeing and find out whether they need any additional support. We're also here to listen to service users and they can phone us when they need to".

The Openline listening service also feeds into a home visiting service that delivers equipment, alongside food and medical supplies if required. Keith Brown, one of our Digital Skills Officers who are also offering remote support, explained: "I provide guidance over the phone on smart phones, iPads, purchase of text to speech software, downloading of talking books, the use of Amazon Echo, and lots of other software. This helps people keep in touch with family and friends".

Please call us on 01244 381515 if you are interested in any of the above services or email us at information@visionsupport.org.uk

Our rehabilitation work through various local councils has been telephone based during the pandemic, unless a visit is essential. Local authorities have different guidelines and we are working alongside them.

We have, however, had some good news that essential workers have been invited for the Covid-19 vaccines, and three Vision Support rehab workers have already had their first jab!

We are hopeful that this will open things up a little more and allow us to provide more face to face services as the year goes on.